

The Website Sustainability Project

TIG
January, 2006

Richard Zorza

Summary of Findings

- Huge progress has been made in creating a national access to justice website network
- Website work is critically important for access to justice now and in the future,
- While much has been achieved, much remains to be done with respect to sustaining the sites for the long term,
- It is critically importance to integrating website sustainability into overall state access to justice funding,
- An expanded role for IOLTA programs is key in supporting and sustaining the websites.

The Key Finding

- *While the Report finds no magic bullet, it believes that the key path to sustainability has been pointed by those states in which funding, content, and marketing of the sites are integrated with the delivery system as a whole, and with the delivery of services in that system.*

Sample Finding: Broad Community Leadership Support

- Almost 70% of respondents agree or agree strongly with the statement that there has been integration of client site planning into the statewide planning process,
- Almost 80% agree or agree strongly with the statement that the site is viewed as one of the main vehicles for advancing access to justice goals,
- Over 80% of respondents agree or agree strongly with the statement that “Key leaders see the Client website as an integral part of the access to justice system in the state”

Sample Finding: IOLTA Role

- 44% of states report an IOLTA client site funding role.
- 37% report an IOLTA advocate site funding role.
- 29% of states report an IOLTA client site in kind support role.
- 16% of states report an IOLTA advocate site in kind support role.
- 21% of states report that IOLTA is NOT a client site stakeholder of any kind, including beneficiary.
- 44% of states report that IOLTA is NOT an advocate site stakeholder of any kind including beneficiary.

Sample Finding: Court Role

- 32% of states report courts as an in-kind supporter of the client site (3% as a funder).
- 68% report courts as beneficiaries of the client websites and 24% report them as not stakeholders.
- 77% of client site survey respondents report that “general legal information accessible 24/7 on litigants’ most basic questions” was “extremely important” or “very important.”
- The parallel number for “directory of free or low cost legal aid programs” was 66%.

Sample Finding: Understanding of Private Bar Benefits

Advocate side survey respondents listed the following benefits to the private bar of the site as “extremely important” or “very important”:

- “Convenient repository of materials routinely used in legal aid practice” 65%;
- “Enable advocates to handle cases in new legal areas” 76%;
- “Pro bono opportunities” 53%;
- “Improve skills and knowledge to more effectively represent clients” 57%.

Sample Finding: Management

- Only 45% of Client site respondents reported that the client state planning body was “representative of cross section of stakeholders”. (Advocate site, 26%)
- Only 48% (client and advocate sites) reported that the site planning committee had “authority and amble ability to implement” .
- 33% of Client Sites and 33% of Advocate Sites Planning Committees meet only quarterly.
- Over 30% of Client and Advocate Sites had no written plan.

Summary of Report Recommendations

- State planning bodies,
- Website staff and managers,
- Coordinating service programs,
- Partner service programs,
- Courts and access partners,
- IOLTA programs and bar foundations,
- Legal Services Corporation,
- Template developers, and
- Other funders.

Core Approach

- Core Portion of Delivery System
- Integration with State Planning
- Cost and Benefit Sharing System
- Statewide Funding Source Optimum
- IOLTA Role
- All Stakeholders Have Roles in Enhancing Key Functions

Recommendations for Website Program Staff and Managers

- A Partnership Strategy.
- Insist on Cost Sharing.
- Use Grant Assurances/Conditions.
- Get Funders to Take State Responsibility.
- Court, Bar and Library as Core Partner.
- Content.
- Marketing and Access Points.
- Evaluation.
- Integration into the Delivery System.
- Strategic Planning.

IOLTA Program Implications

- Statewide Leadership.
- Consider State-Wide Responsibility and Funding.
- Statewide Programmatic Use.
- Require and Incentivise Participation.
- Push “spine” and integration.
- Reach out to other funders.
- Act as a bridge to court and bar.
- Partnering with LSC.

Recommendations for Templates

- Partnering and Marketing Support.
- Software Enhancements.
- Multiple Constituency Support.
- System “Spine” Innovations.